



# SENATOR MARK NORRIS

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## LEAP Law Signed Today Enables Students to Work, Earn and Learn



Left-right Rich Rhoda (Tennessee Higher Education Commission), Burns Phillips (Labor and Workforce Development), Scott Sloan (THEC), Ted Townsend (Economic and Community Development) and Randy Boyd.

NASHVILLE, Tenn. – Governor Bill Haslam today signed into law legislation sponsored by Senate Majority Leader Mark Norris (R-Collierville) aiming to put Tennessee on the forefront of states in the nation in job readiness programs, while increasing the number of college graduates. The signing of the new law, entitled the Labor Education Alignment Program (LEAP), comes on the heels of a report recently released by the Workforce Investment Network in partnership with the Greater Memphis Chamber of Commerce. The report recommended collaborations between local governments, higher education and job readiness programs to form a sustainable pipeline of job-ready workers to fill an estimated 4,000 jobs in Memphis alone by 2016.

“This new law not only lays the foundation for the cooperative effort of government, higher education and businesses looking for skilled workers for purposes of providing on-the-job apprenticeship training, but it enables this job training to be compensated without interfering with the student’s financial assistance,” said Senator Norris. “The cooperative training then counts as part of an approved curriculum toward a meaningful certificate or degree, effectively enabling Tennesseans to simultaneously work, earn and learn.”

Norris said the legislation will help ease the loss of approximately 15,000 industrial jobs which have left the Greater Memphis area over the last decade as manufacturing has declined nationwide. The new law allows students at Tennessee’s technology centers and colleges the opportunity to combine occupational training in a high-skill or high-technology industry with academic credit and to apply that experience toward a degree. He said the bill is not unlike the old apprentice programs of generations past, where students get a practical utilization of what they’re learning from the books.

“But we’re adding a modern higher education component to address what Tennessee employers keep asking for: job candidates with the requisite skills needed in today’s technologically-advanced workplace. This will give our state and local economic development leaders a huge boost as they recruit new jobs to Tennessee.”

“This legislation bolsters the Complete College Tennessee Act and helps the state in our ‘Drive to 55 by 2025.’ Most importantly, it shows industry that, in Tennessee, we mean business. Overall, it will serve to strengthen our economy and improve the quality of life for all Tennesseans,” Norris continued.

Experts maintain that within the next five years, over half of all jobs in Tennessee will require postsecondary credentials beyond a high school degree. With this in mind, Governor Haslam set the goal of increasing the percentage of Tennesseans with a postsecondary credential from 32% to 55% by 2025.

The bill is sponsored by House Majority Leader Gerald McCormick (R-Chattanooga) in the House of Representatives.

Senator Norris represents the 32nd Senate District in Shelby and Tipton Counties.

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